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WEBINAR:

READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

RESEARCH INITIATIVE

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PROCEEDINGS

Slide One:

DR. ALBRO: All right. Now I'm live. Sorry. I keep talking to the space. Good morning, everyone. This is Liz Albro from the National Center for Education Research. I want to welcome you to the Reading for Understanding Research Initiative webinar.

For those of you who haven't done one of these before, the way that we'll proceed is I am going to walk through the slides, and I will stop at sensible points and answer questions. I know I already have a couple questions that I'll answer at appropriate points as we go through. As questions occur to you, go ahead and use the Q&A box and send them to us, and I will make sure that we go back over everything and do our best to answer the question. So, welcome.

All right. For many of you, I hope that everyone has looked at the Request for Applications and pulled it down off of the IES website. My job today is to sort of walk you through our vision of what the Reading for Understanding Initiative hopes to do. I'll talk with you a little bit about the expectations for both core team and research team applications, and then I will talk with you a little bit about sort of the procedures that we need to go through in terms of how you submit applications to IES and various things like that.

Slide Two:

With no further ado, the challenge, as I'm sure that many of you on the phone know, is that we have—in our nation, we continue to have too many students who cannot understand what they read. Although we've spent a lot of time and attention devoted to reading, the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores for 4th, 8th, and 12th graders suggest there are substantial numbers of kids who are progressing through our school systems and not coming out with the ability to comprehend the text that they read, certainly not at the level one would expect for success in the workplace.

I hope that—one of the sort of things that we know is that in order to read with understanding, you as a reader need to both have mastered word level skills, as well as comprehension-related skills and knowledge. I sort of created that larger category because I think that our understanding of everything that contributes to comprehension is still something that we are trying to understand better, and again, if you have looked at the RFA, you will notice that we have a request for cognitive teams to be participating in both the core and assessment networks, and in part, it's to help the field continue to advance our understanding of what components contribute to comprehension. That's the problem, and the new initiative is really hoping to concentrate resources to try to address this comprehension problem.

Slide Three:

What do we know? I think that a review of the research, the research field, will show the reader that we have developed, we've gained a whole lot of knowledge over the past 30 to 40 years about how children's word level skills develop.

The National Institutes of Health and other researcher—research funding agencies have invested a tremendous amount of time and resources in looking at that level. We have also got a good set of understanding about how to provide instructions to support initial mastery of word level skills. We have a good set of knowledge about how to work with kids at the outset in terms of word level skills.

We have also been able to develop assessments that allow both teachers and reading specialists and other individuals in the school context how to assess their mastery of these word level skills. We feel—I mean, sort of our read of the literature is that we have made good progress on this side.

Slide Four:

However, there are many questions around how to support comprehension that continue to be asked and raised over and over again. I think that anyone who works in the area of reading knows that vocabulary and prior knowledge are two of the primary correlates of comprehension outcomes, and so we know that there is a role for oral language and language development to play in the mastery of reading and comprehension, but we have much less knowledge, then, than we need in terms of how to support oral language or language development in the context of school.

We also know that understanding text processing, looking at things like genre and how to make sense of different forms of text, that that is an area of research where there has been some attention, but there continues to need to be additional attention.

And finally, in all the work that I do working with comprehension researchers, there is an ongoing conversation about how do we measure comprehension. There's a lot of conversations about how comprehension measures are not measuring the same thing, how some comprehension measures seem to really be picking up differences in word level skills and don't seem to be picking up comprehension, and then there are other—and there still is much knowledge to be gained about how best to measure comprehension.

These are three areas that we have targeted in this initiative, and we hope that researchers will be willing to jump up to the challenge and work with us.

I want to also say that while these are three areas that we have identified, I want folks to know that they are not the only areas that one could explore in the context of an application.

Slide Five:

So, because the need for improving reading comprehension is so great and so critical for a student's academic performance across the age span, we are putting forward a different model for a research enterprise with this initiative.

Slide Six:

What are we doing? Our goal is to create a tightly linked research and development network of core research teams and assessment team(s). I have the “s” in parentheses there because we certainly intend to fund one assessment team, but we may fund more than one assessment team if we get sufficiently strong applications that come through and that the reviewers recommend for funding.

Each of these teams, both the core research teams and the assessment teams, will be focused on reading comprehension and how to support reading comprehension across multiple grades and across content areas, and together, the work, the projects that we fund through this initiative will cover the prekindergarten-to-12th-grade continuum. I think one of the other challenges that research has faced, that we have researchers who are really strong in the early grades, we have research teams who are really strong in the upper grades, but there are few researchers who have thought together about how to support comprehension across the entire school sector.

Slide Seven:

I don't know if anyone can see this image. For those of you who haven't seen the image, it's in the RFA, and this is our understanding of how this network will, hopefully, take place. There will be a leadership team. These awards will be cooperative agreements, and a leadership team will be formed with folks from IES and two members of each of the R&D network teams, so the principal investigator and one other individual who is identified, who will be identified by the teams more than likely but in conjunction perhaps with IES.

All right. Each of these teams will work—will target a specific age span. The teams are required to target at least five years of work. They have to work through sort of prekindergarten. There should be five grades in any of the applications that come forward.

Within each of those network teams, we expect there to be teams composed of each of the four, of these four different groups. One team should be focused on cognitive processes. It could be oral language, promotion of general knowledge and background knowledge that's critical to comprehension, text processing, but there should be a team of individuals who will be carrying out some small-scale cognitive work trying to unpack what needs to go into comprehension.

There will be another team of researchers who will be focused on intervention development, and we really expect that there will be a rapid testing, developing testing, getting information back, retesting models, and that this will be happening—this development and testing will be happening simultaneously across the grades that your team has identified as the age group that you want to work with.

We have not identified sort of what the components of the intervention development or what components will be required, but we anticipate that the interventions will include things like instructional practices curriculum and technology.

There will also be a team of school and district personnel who we expect to be identified at the time of application who will be integrally involved in this development process. Our hope is that by getting school and district personnel involved at the outset of the projects, we will be able to create interventions that meet the needs of schools and kids at the get-go, at the outset.

And finally, you should include in your description of the teams within your application an evaluation group, a set of individuals who will be carrying out the efficacy trials of those interventions that you are testing and developing in the first two years. All right?

There will also be network assessment teams or a team, and the responsibilities of the assessment team will be to create—well, to do two things. One is to complete some developmental work, trying to look at the development of comprehension over that preK-to-12 spectrum, and then to develop and validate summative assessments that can be used to measure comprehension outcomes that are vertically and horizontally aligned—right—so aligned across age and across content and across construct. There is also an option for assessment teams to do formative assessment work, but that is an option.

Okay. That was the big overview, and now I'm going to unpack this even further for everyone.

Slide Eight:

The goals of the R&D network core team—so they have sort of two big, big goals, and I think I talked about them quickly. Now I'll talk about them a little bit more extensively. One team—and so this is what we are calling the cognitive team—will be really focused on examining the underlying processes of reading comprehension and will be working to identify malleable processes that may be targets of intervention for enhancing reading comprehension.

We anticipate that most applicants will already have some ideas about malleable processes and things that can be identified, but we want to support additional work looking, examining whether there are additional points where we might want to intervene.

And then there will be two additional subteams, if you will, who will be responsible for the development of the intervention and then a team responsible for carrying out that evaluation component. Again—and the focus here is always to enhance reading comprehension. Okay. That's just restating what I've already said.

Slide Nine:

Again, note that our intent is to evaluate—in the final years of the project, to evaluate the impact of these interventions on student outcomes. That is part of the key.

Slide Ten:

For the assessment team, we hope that the assessment teams will propose to carry out work that will help advance our theoretical understanding of reading comprehension. It will, the team will conduct research which examines the underlying model of development of reading comprehension from prekindergarten to 12th grade and develop and test a set of summative reading comprehension assessments.

The assessment team will be developing the summative assessments with the goal being for those summative assessments to be used in the efficacy trials carried out by the core teams.

I have a question here which says, *“Will core teams be using assessments developed by the assessment team?”*

Certainly, for the efficacy trial, we intend for that to happen, and the language is explicit in the RFA that that is the expectation.

The question continues, *“Will the core teams be developing their own measures or using extant measures like existing comprehension or accountability tests?”*

I think it is certainly possible that core teams may want to be doing some own, say, formative assessments or curriculum-based assessments that are tightly linked to the assessments that they’re—I mean to the interventions that they are developing, and I would also assume that there will be a use of extant measures like existing comprehension or accountability tests.

Particularly when we move into the final years of this initiative, we will want to be using the comprehension measure developed by the assessment team or assessment teams, so that we can determine whether we’ve got a better comprehension measure, like capturing comprehension, but we are also going to need to know whether we are able to improve students’ outcomes on tests that are important to the schools, so certainly standardized measures and accountability measures might—should be ones that are proposed to be included in this study, in your applicant—in your proposal.

All right. Great. Please let me know if that’s not clear, and I will come back again to do questions.

Slide Eleven:

These applications are substantially larger than the applications that we typically—that we accept under our regular Request for Applications. The Reading for Understanding applications are 40 single-spaced pages in terms of their Research Narrative, and they will include five components. Again, for those of you familiar with the IES structure, there will be a section devoted to significance, a section devoted to the research plan, a section devoted to personnel, and a section devoted to resources.

What is new and different is the management plan. We will expect each applicant to describe how they propose to coordinate these multiple teams, and that is going to be a big challenge because we are hoping to bring together individuals who may not have strong histories of working together, and so managing that work and coordinating that work will be important. I think the designation of the principal investigator as a lead on this project will be a really important decision.

I have a question here. I'm going to just read out these questions, and then we're going to—I'll talk about them as we move forward. We have a question about regarding the composition of teams, any thought about management from multiple universities, and then another question, ***“Is there an expectation of how many institutions and/or individuals be on a proposed team?”***

We do not have any stated expectation of how many institutions and/or individuals on a proposed team. However, this effort is going to be intense. We are going to be asking researchers to work across five grade levels and across multiple content areas, and I think that there certainly are often different individuals who bring different skills sets across the cognitive curriculum interventions, certainly school and district personnel, and evaluation teams. I don't have an idea of how many people will be involved, but, clearly, there is an expectation that there will be multiple teams of individuals within each of these teams.

I think that the question about the management across multiple universities, I'm glad to talk more about that. That's going to be a challenge, certainly.

Slide Twelve:

Okay. Let me just talk through each of the sections and what the—what is stated in the RFAs, what the reviewers of these applications will be asked to consider in reviewing your application.

Slide Thirteen:

So, significance. The significance section of the application, just so you know, there will be a significance for each component. Right? You will need to provide some significance for basic research on cognitive processes. Describe your theoretical and empirical rationale for the proposed research that you and your team intend to carry out on underlying cognitive processes, and, of course, articulate your vision of how this is going to help us advance knowledge and how we understand reading comprehension.

Slide Fourteen:

For your interventions that are being proposed to be developed, you should also describe what are those theoretical and empirical rationales. We are particularly interested in having researchers attend to developing interventions for enhancing oral language. That is clearly not the only intervention that one could propose, but it is certainly something that we expect applicants to attend to.

There should be a discussion of a general theory of change for the set of interventions for those of you familiar with our Goal 2 Development Proposals. Then if you all want to think more about theory of change, that is a great place to look.

You should also spend some time describing your intervention. You may not know exactly what they are going to look like, but you should—I would expect that researchers will be building on prior work that they have done. One of the reasons that we think this is an opportune time to carry out this kind of work is that there has been a substantial investment on the part of IES and on the part of other funding agencies to fund research, looking at different sort of components of this—right—the different aspects, different types of comprehension interventions, and so we certainly are not expecting people to start from ground zero.

And so describe—you should be able to have at least a vision of where you hope—what you think these interventions might look like. Clearly, what the interventions look like may change as a function of what you learn as the research is being carried out, and again, how is this work going to help us move kids in terms of building their oral language and general world knowledge, these things that we know are critical to supporting comprehension research over time—I mean comprehension outcomes over time.

Slide Fifteen:

Okay. The core team also is going to have to talk about their research plans. Now, I think this is going to be one of the hardest—the hardest thing in this proposal is to figure out how much detail you put in and how much detail about each of the different pieces. I think different teams and different applicants are going to come up with different ways to do this. We have—excuse me. We have stated that for the evaluation project, you don't have to—the evaluation component, you don't have to lay out every efficacy or evaluation trial you plan to do, but you do need to include at least one fully articulated example. I am getting ahead of myself.

Slide Sixteen:

In terms of the plans for basic research on underlying cognitive processes, again, please make sure that the rationale has been articulated. You should have articulated it in the significance section, but you may want to draw on that again when you are talking about your research design.

You are expected to specify the types of research questions and/or hypotheses that you plan to explore over the five years of your award. Please provide details for the reviewers about what it is you are proposing to do. You have got your research question, what is the sample composition, what do the students look like that you are planning to work with, the teachers, what measures will you use, so referring to the earlier questions. Clearly, at this point, you may have a mix of measures that you have developed, that a researcher developed, as well as standardized measures. Again, we are looking at cognitive processing. There are standardized measures that may be very important, depending upon the question you are asking.

You will be expected to describe how you plan to collect data, what the design is, and provide a description of the analytic procedures that you are planning to carry out in order to answer these questions about these underlying processes.

Slide Seventeen:

You will have one section that describes the methodological, the research plan for the basic cognitive processes. There should then be a second research plan, if you will, that focuses on your plans for developing a set of interventions that will cut across multiple grades and content areas. Again, refer back to what this intervention is going to look like, what your theoretical model is of how you think the interventions you will be proposing will work to improve outcomes for students, and if there is any prior empirical data, you should certainly include a description of that.

You also need to spend some time in this section describing the iterative development process. This is actually going to become—this will be an interesting—this is going to be a challenging section to write, and you will need to think about some management issues in how you are going to do simultaneous development of multiple instantiations of the basic intervention or interventions that you are doing across grade levels and content areas.

Clearly, this may be something that the teachers and school personnel may have some interesting ideas about. You want to think about how is this development going to happen, what is the timeline going to look like, are you going to be doing a lot of work outside of schools first, are you going to work in schools immediately from the very beginning. Think creatively about how, how we can rapidly prototype and test these new interventions.

The other part that will be critical—and I know I had a question that asked about the role of teachers and school personnel in the design of the intervention—we are envisioning that the teachers and school personnel will be very involved in this development process. We know—and as I am sure all of you on the phone know—that there are critically important—there's lots of knowledge that teachers and school personnel have about how to create interventions that work and how to create interventions that work for their particular school setting.

We expect them to be involved from the beginning. If you haven't started talking with teachers, I would encourage you to start now and have them involved in the proposal-writing process. They should be involved in helping you think through what might this iterative development process look like in a school context, in their school context.

Slide Eighteen:

Okay. Again, for those of you not familiar with our Goal 2, the iterative development process, in that process you need to define what the operating, as intended, means for the intervention you are proposing. We all—when we are creating new interventions, we have visions, as it were. Right? We have ideas about what these

curricula or these interventions will look like. You need to articulate what that means for the reviewers to understand, and you need to describe what data you are planning to collect to determine if the intervention or the relevant component is operating, so how will you know if the intervention is, in fact, taking place as you intended for it to take place, so things like observational data or teacher survey data, or if you are using technology, you might want to propose to gather log data or information about how students are engaging with it.

And you need to explain how you are going to use this data, the data that you collect, to revise the intervention, and finally—oh, I forgot this, what is the criteria, but you need to be as explicit as you can about the processes, the data you are going to collect, how you are going to interpret the data that you gather, and then how you are going to use it to revise this intervention.

Because we are asking for applicants to propose developing interventions that can be or instantiations of interventions that can be delivered across multiple grade levels, I would expect that part of this development process will involve looking at the ways in which these interventions may have different constraints or may operate differently with these different age groups. That is something to think about.

Slide Nineteen:

And then, finally, in your research plan, there will be a section that you will describe the methodological plan for evaluating the efficacy of the intervention. For the purposes of the application, you should write a plan to evaluate the intervention that you are developing. Right? This will be something that will allow you not to have to go back and re-create a new theory of change, and clearly, the hope is that we will be—that each of the teams will be evaluating the interventions that they develop. However, please know that because of this tight coordination across the teams, what is evaluated may look differently, that is different than originally intended right at the end of the day, but for the purposes of the application, you need to describe how you propose to evaluate the efficacy of the comprehension interventions that you are proposing to develop.

Again, we specify the samples. Please make sure you spend time describing your research design. You will need to complete a power analysis to ensure that you have sufficient power in your design to detect the effects you hope to see, describe what measures you are planning to use at this time point, and you should certainly include in here that you intend to include as one of your outcome measures the comprehension measurement, the comprehension assessment that will be developed by the assessment team. Clearly, we don't know what those assessments are yet, but you should certainly plan to incorporate language that says you recognize that you will be using those measures, as well as any other measures that you want to use.

Describe how implementation will be documented, what fidelity measures are you going to use, so that we know whether implementation is occurring as we expect it, and the other thing that will be important for the description of the efficacy trial is to describe what instruction will be delivered in a comparison group to the best of your knowledge.

Given that this is going to be happening several years into the grant process, my expectation is that what the comparison groups are receiving may, in fact, change, but, to the best of your knowledge, describe what is currently happening on the ground in the schools that you plan to be working in.

And then please talk about how you intend to analyze this data. Give procedures. Describe how you are going to account for nesting of students and then teachers and classrooms and schools and any other analytic procedures that may be important, given the work you are planning to carry out.

Okay. I am going to pause here for a second and see if there are any other questions. I don't think so. Okay. Excellent. Good. Yeah. Oh. We have this question, ***“To what extent do you expect that the intervention development might build on existing R&D work?”***

I certainly alluded to this earlier. I think that it would be unlikely for applicants to come in without having done prior intervention development work. There may be cases that I am not—you know, there may be cases where it is possible, but, certainly, if you have done prior intervention development work that is germane to this question, you will want to describe that and certainly think about how that fits in with the overall call to move comprehension. Okay? All right.

Slide Twenty:

Now, in terms of the core team, in terms of personnel. I think, I hope, it is clear that the individuals involved in the project will need to bring expertise and understanding of underlying cognitive processes that contribute to comprehension. They will need to have expertise in developing and testing interventions. They will need to have expertise in evaluating the impact of intervention. They will need to have expertise with schools or other education agencies and, in fact, should be—there should be individuals who are working with schools or other—who are working in schools on the team as well. These projects will be large in terms of the number of individuals involved and large and diverse in terms of the kinds of expertise that they bring to the table, and I think it will be really important as you are pulling these applications together to think about how these individuals will work well together as a team and how that effort will be managed at the site level.

Slide Twenty-one:

The management plan. I think, again, because of the size and scope of these projects, the management plan will be an important part of all of these applications. You and your team will need to think about how you plan to coordinate the work of these various subgroups within the core teams, and you will need to also describe how the management team at your individual site will facilitate ongoing communication between the core team and the assessment team. There is going to need to be ongoing communication as the cognitive researchers and the core teams are learning things. We hope that that information will be shared with the assessment team, and vice versa, as the assessment team is learning about how comprehension is developing over time, they will

be feeding that information to the core teams as well. We expect that there will be—certainly, IES will facilitate ongoing communication, but we also hope that the research teams will think about ways in which that facilitation can be supported.

Slide Twenty-two:

In terms of resources, this is always important. Again, for a project—for projects of this scope, I think it is important to spend some time describing what those resources are, perhaps in more detail than you would in a smaller award. Talk about the support that exists at the current research institution to support this kind of, sort of—how do I say this—sort of is this interaction between multiple individuals who come, perhaps from multiple disciplinary homes, what about is there technological support? For example, if you are planning to use Skype or if you are going to use webinars to talk to each other, do you have the technological support to do that? If you are having multiple institutions who are involved, what are the supports that are available at those? And you must include Letters of Agreement from participating schools and/or teachers. Right? We need to have some evidence that the schools are on board and willing to participate.

I have a question here which says, *“Can you research comprehension for special populations, i.e., students with learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, autism, or English language learners?”*

I think that that could certainly be a subset of questions. I certainly think—and particularly the students with learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and autism, those are important groups who are often—who can be treated sort of separately from the typical education setting or can be integrated into that, and so you would need to talk about how the work you would carry out with these special populations would support the larger work of the project, which is really targeting reading comprehension outcome for a broad range of students, which would include those students in special populations.

I think English language learners are somewhat—sort of that brings a different set of questions. I certainly expect that applicants will—that there will be applicants who will be focusing on and talking about how to serve and support the comprehension outcomes of English language learners, and so if there are individuals on the call who are interested in that, I would definitely encourage you to think about it.

I do also, however, want to put out to you that if you plan to do comprehension research or if you sort of plan to work with English language learner populations, there will be another level of information that you will need to include in terms of thinking about how the interventions will look the same or different for students who are original speakers of English or students who are learning English while they are also trying to learn how to read. There’s different sets of questions.

“You mentioned developing and testing a single intervention in various contexts and grade levels and subject areas. Is the expectation that there may be multiple interventions tested?”

I certainly—you know, I think that it will depend, but I certainly think that it is not precluded—right—that there will be multiple interventions that will be tested within each core team. Clearly, across the core teams that we support, there is going to be more than one intervention that will be developed.

You know, we tend to use the word “intervention” in its broadest possible understanding. I think that you could certainly think about developing more than one intervention, although you are going to have to think long and hard about what can you describe coherently in the space of 40 single-spaced pages. I am happy to talk with folks later and one-on-one about their particular project.

I have here a question: *“Is there a mechanism of introducing interested individuals or institutions to facilitate the formation of strong diverse teams?”*

We don’t have any formal mechanisms in place for doing that. I would certainly encourage you to reach out to researchers who have strength in those fields, and I am certainly happy to talk with individual applicants about ways in which to think about how to broaden, how to broaden their reach or who might be good individuals, but we don’t have a formalized—a formal way of doing that.

All right? Okay. Thanks for the questions. I think that really helps make these webinars be really productive. Keep them coming.

Slide Twenty-three:

All right. The award amounts. I think you guys all probably went there first when you saw the RFA released, but we anticipate that the core teams will receive awards from two to \$4 million per year, total cost. I think that this monitoring that reflects the scope of the work that we are expecting to see proposed in our applications, the maximum length of the award is five years, and as is always the case, the size of the award will depend upon the scope of the project proposed, but that gives you a sense of the level of effort that we expect to see expended in these core team projects.

Slide Twenty-four:

All right. I am going to pause just for a second here and see if people are typing really fast, and if I don’t have questions, I am going to move on to the assessment team application.

Okay. For those of you on the phone who are interested in putting in an assessment team application, the applications are, of course, somewhat different. However, the expectations are that what is going to be done by the assessment team will be happening in ways that will facilitate the generation of knowledge across all of the teams. It goes both ways. Right? The core team to the assessment team, and then the assessment team also will inform—their work will inform what the core teams do.

Slide Twenty-five:

In applications for the assessment team, in your significance section, you should present and justify a theoretical model of reading comprehension and its development from prekindergarten through grade 12. Again, I think that one of the hopes behind this initiative is that we can build knowledge that covers the sort of the range of schooling-related comprehension development. It doesn't only have to be schooling-related, but, instead of having pockets of knowledge about how comprehension develops from, say, ages 4 to 7, and then from ages 18 to 25, we could actually have knowledge gains that covers the whole age span.

You also in the significance section should describe the summative assessments that you hope to develop, what the characteristics will be, what's the theoretical model—I mean how is that theoretical model that you have proposed, how will that be instantiated in the proposed assessments that you are intending to develop. There should be a discussion of what constructs the proposed assessments will measure.

Slide Twenty-six:

As always, we expect there to be a discussion of the methodological requirements that—or the methodological plan that the assessment work will carry out, so how do you plan to test the underlying theoretical model; what techniques are you going to use; what kind of data will you be collecting? Clearly, there is going to have to be some cross-sectional work. We don't have 13 years' worth of funding here. You can't simply propose a simple longitudinal model where you follow one cohort of kids, but will there be a longitudinal component? How will those things play out?

Under assessment development, as is true for the development of the interventions, talk about the iterative process. Again, this is going to depend upon what your team looks like, where you are starting, if you already have some assessments developed, or if you have some preliminary versions, you may not need to go all the way back to item development, but, if you don't, item development will be part of the assessment process, and then how will you decide which items to use as you move forward, and then you will need to discuss how you intend to evaluate the assessment. Right? How are you planning to gather information about validity and reliability? So, clearly assessment evaluation, the assessment applications will need to talk about what other measures of comprehension they propose to use to answer questions of validity and how are they going to determine reliability, so the standard sorts of things that you expect to see for an assessment application.

Slide Twenty-seven:

Okay. For the assessment team, there is also an option to include other proposed research. You may propose—if you are interested in putting in an assessment application, you may propose to develop formative reading comprehension assessments to use in any grade from prekindergarten to grade 12. However, please do note that this is not a requirement of the RFA. There is a requirement to propose to describe summative assessments, but there is not a requirement to propose the development of formative assessments. However, that is certainly something that one could propose.

In addition, if you are interested in testing the efficacy of using formative assessments to improve reading comprehension, assessment teams can propose to do that. Please note that if you do that, there are going to be expectations around describing how you plan to test that efficacy that are not fully articulated in the RFA. Again, if there are individuals on the phone thinking about this, please do be in touch with me. I would be happy to help you to think about ways in which you could propose to do that.

I have a question here which says, *“You have incorporated oral language as an explicit focus of the project. Have you intentionally excluded writing as a possible companion focus?”*

We have not intentionally excluded writing. I think that we specifically called out oral language because the sort of theoretical research on comprehension outcomes suggest that this is one of the most—this is a critical contributor to comprehension success and yet one that there has actually been little research attention devoted to, particularly in the context of school. We pulled that out, but I think that writing may also be an important component here, but it is not required. If it is something that your team brings that you think is a strength and you can integrate it into the comprehension, proposed comprehension model, I don’t see any reason not to include it, but, again, I am happy to talk with you further about that.

Slide Twenty-eight:

Okay. For the assessment team, we expect to see individuals who bring expertise in reading comprehension and oral language development and text processing, since we are looking at the development of those components over time, and any other components that you are proposing. The thing to note here is that we have sort of said here is what we expect, but it is not going to be complete because we expect that different applicants and different teams of individuals will bring different strengths. Please make sure that the strengths of your personnel map well onto your development of the assessments, your development of interventions that you and your team are proposing to do.

Clearly, we expect that the assessment team will have experts in assessment on their team, so psychometricians, measurement folks, anyone, you know, item developers. Individuals on the team should bring the skills that you will need in order to carry out the work proposed.

Again, there may need to be another individual or individuals involved who have expertise in implementations of and analysis of results from the proposed research design—and I probably should say designs because there will be more than one research design in this application, I am sure. And again, we expect there to be expertise in working with teachers, schools, or education delivery settings.

Slide Twenty-nine:

As in the core teams, I would encourage the assessment teams to bring on teachers and schools and individuals who can help you to think about what some of their

needs in these assessments might be. Get the teachers and schools who are going to be the end users of these tools involved at the get-go, at the outset.

Okay? As in the core teams, the assessment team will need to describe their management plans, how, again, are the works of the various groups within the R&D network assessment team be coordinated, how are you going to have the developmental work inform the work of the assessment development group, how are they going to communicate, what might your timeline look like, and then the assessment team also has to specify and think about how they are going to facilitate coordination of the use of their measures that they are developing, their measures probably that they are developing across these core teams. You will want to think a little bit about how you propose to do that.

Slide Thirty:

And finally, again, resources are an important component, and we certainly don't want to neglect them, particularly not on a project of this scope. Talk about the institutional resources that the participating institutions bring to completing this work. Make sure you include a documentation of access to the schools, and please explain what physical and measurement resources you have available, so that you can carry out the work as proposed.

Slide Thirty-one:

The assessment team, we have specified an award range of one to \$3 million total cost per year. That is direct and indirect costs. Again, we expect the awards to go up to five years in length, and, as always, the size of the award proposed will depend upon the scope of the project that is proposed.

Slide Thirty-two:

Again, I want to remind you all that in addition to the 40-single-spaced-page Research Narrative, you also have 15 pages in Appendix A and 15 pages in—I mean 10 pages in Appendix B—sorry—10 pages in Appendix B. In Appendix A, you should include Letters of Agreement from schools. If you are proposing to have consultants or advisory boards or an advisory board, Letters of Agreement from those individuals should be included there, and if you have any supporting tables and figures, things like timelines or perhaps a table or a figure of data that you collected, then, earlier, in earlier research, all of that information can be included in Appendix A.

Slide Thirty-three:

In Appendix B, we get questions of whether you could be building upon prior R&D work that you have done in intervention. Please feel free to include in Appendix B examples of any materials that you have developed for your proposed scope and sequence, maybe how you might think about the movement across these grades, anything that relates to the content of the materials themselves or examples of the materials themselves or the measures that you are planning to use. That can go in Appendix B.

Awesome. Okay. That's kind of the content part of the presentation.

Slide Thirty-four:

I am going to talk a little bit now about the components of the Application Package itself, what needs to be included, and then I will talk a little bit about our review process. And again, I will be happy to answer questions as we walk through this.

What will the application include? The application will include a project narrative. It will include a bibliography and the references cited. There will be biographical sketches of key project personnel. There will be a narrative budget justification. There will be subaward budgets, and I expect that for the vast majority of the applications that we will see will have multiple awards. There will be one main institution. The award will be given to a single institution, and then subawards will be given to—or how do I say this? Sorry. That all of the funds will go to the main institution, but subawards are also certainly possible. But those budgets need to be included in the original application.

Slide Thirty-five:

I realize I forgot there is also an abstract here. There should also be a one-page abstract, Appendix A, Appendix B, and then the additional forms. If you are fortunate enough to be selected for funding, then there will be additional forms that you will be asked to complete after you receive notification that you have been recommended for funding.

Slide Thirty-six:

Formatting requirements. Again, for those of you unfamiliar with this process, the abstract is one page, single-spaced. The Research Narrative is no longer than 40 single-spaced pages. This is a substantive piece of writing and piece of work. The bibliography has no page limit. If you have lots of cites, that's okay. Each biographical sketch is limited to four pages. You need to remind your key personnel to give you a short version of their CV, and each investigator should include a fifth page, which includes a description of current and pending support.

The budget justification also has no page limit. Appendix A can be no longer than 15 pages. Appendix B can be no longer than 10 pages. All right? Those are sort of the general formatting requirements.

Slide Thirty-seven:

As you prepare your application, again, if you have not downloaded the full Request for Applications, please do so. You want to go to the ies.ed.gov/funding. That is where you can download both the RFA, as well as the IES/Grants.gov Submission Guide. This Submission Guide will help you walk through the forms, where to put the information in, what kind of information gets uploaded to what section. It really helps walk you through that Grants.gov process, with specific guidance for IES applications.

Please do sign up for the Newsflash. Again, I think that for most of you here, you are already signed up for the Newsflash. That is how you knew this webinar was happening, but please do. If you haven't or if you know of colleagues who aren't, please

encourage them to do that. That way, you will receive any notification if there is new information you need to know about or any, well, just anything else, if there are additional webinars. Okay?

Slide Thirty-eight:

The due date. Applications are due on October 1, 2009. They must be received at 4:30 and zero seconds, Washington, D.C., time. I do want to encourage you all to submit early. Please know that we do not accept late applications, and given the amount of work that I know you all are going to invest in preparing these applications, we certainly wouldn't want them to have to be returned without review. Please, please do send the applications in on time. I would even recommend doing it early, and remember that it is the Grants.gov computer time that matters, not what is on your computer.

Slide Thirty-nine:

I guess I didn't put the peer review process in here. This is my email address. For those of you who are interested, the peer review process at IES typically involves a two-stage process where we have panels of reviewers, each of whom will review the applications received, provide scores on each of the criterion areas, and then provide an overall score, and once that initial process is complete, the most competitive applications are brought forward to review.

Given we will have a different panel or there will be a separate review of this because the criteria for this are different from our typical Request for Applications, so it may be, again, depending upon how many applications we get, everything may be reviewed by this whole panel. We just don't know yet, but there will be external peer review. There will be multiple individuals reading your proposal. There will be a panel discussion of those applications.

Please know that—here, I want to pull this language out—that we state that you must designate if it is a core team or an assessment team application, and that a research team may receive only one award, whether the award is a core team award or an assessment team award. Individuals will need to make a decision about whether they are coming in for the core team or assessment team award and only submit a single application to this particular Request for Application.

We anticipate funding at least one assessment award, and we will fund enough core team awards so that we can cover that prekindergarten-to-12th-grade span. However, know that that will depend upon the applications being received that are considered by the reviewers to be of sufficient quality to be recommended for funding, and, of course, it always is contingent upon availability of funding.

All right. I have two additional questions right now. It says, ***“In addition to involving teachers and other educators from the beginning of the proposal-writing process, do you anticipate each core team will describe iterative work that involves educators and intervention development and testing cycles?”***

Yes, indeed, I certainly do. I think that the educator's role in intervention development and testing may be critical. Please, please do describe how you plan to involve their expertise in the work you propose to do.

Then I have another question which says, ***“Are educators expected to play a role in the basic cognitive research process?”***

I think that will depend upon what kinds of questions the cognitive researchers are proposing to ask and how they plan to collect that data. I don't believe the RFA specifies anything about that, and I think each team will need to make different decisions about the role of educators in that aspect of the project.

“As with other IES opportunities, will you review and comment on draft proposals?”

I will, indeed, be glad to help as much as I can. Please do be in touch. For those of you who know me, you know that I am always happy to provide feedback, as well as providing consultation as you prepare these applications. It is an exciting process, and we are really looking forward to seeing what applications come through and working together with teams to really tackle this big problem that we have in our country and trying to get everybody up to strong levels of reading comprehension.

That only took an hour. I'm going to just pause for a few minutes, if people are madly typing, if you have other questions that you want to ask. I hope everyone sort of gets sort of the vision behind this project, this initiative, and how it is different from our typical education research grants program but how it certainly draws on the knowledge that we have gained through that, that research program.

We have another one? Oh, here it comes. We've got a little bit of a delay here. ***“So are you soliciting expert readers to serve on the panel to rate these proposals?”***

If you are interested in serving on the review panel, you can please send me your CV. Our standards and review panel—I mean our Standards and Review Office is responsible for organizing the review. I actually don't have anything to do with that process, but I can certainly send information forward to them as they start to think about the composition of the review panel.

I have to do my good wait time here.

Oh. ***“Will IES completely manage the leadership team? In other words, we don't have to mention the leadership team work in our applications?”***

You certainly will need to discuss—in part of your management plan, I think you should discuss how you envision or who you envision being part of the leadership team. I am just pulling up the RFA here to see what we say about it. Because there are cooperative agreements, IES will certainly be involved in the leadership team, but I think

that you do want to spend a little bit of time in your management plans discussing sort of how you envision your team being part of that leadership team. For example, how do you propose identifying who the members of your team would be that would be part of the leadership team? I don't think we specified that.

Sorry. I am talking away from the mic. I'm sure people can't hear me.

“So, for a prekindergarten-to-grade-five proposal, how important is the focus on content area, for example, science, or is the expectation that comprehension will span content areas?”

I think that our—certainly, for prekindergarten to grade five, there will be an expectation for focus on content. Certainly, kids from the time they are in kindergarten are in content courses, and certainly, one important thing to think about will be how your comprehension intervention will support learning across those content areas. I mean, I think for the early grades, it will most assuredly look different than for the later grades, but it should certainly be a part of that, your application.

This is another question coming. We've got a little bit of a delay here. ***“Please give us a few details about what the power analysis work looks like.”***

Oh, you know, I didn't describe in great deal about the power analysis. However, what we expect—and if you need additional guidance, please know that there is a discussion of the power analysis both in this RFA and in our regular big Request for Applications. The power analysis will need to include information about the degree to which the efficacy trials that will be carried out in years three, four, and five of the application or the later years of the project, how you—will you have sufficient numbers of schools, teachers, children, in order to detect effects that you would expect to see given the measures you are using and the type of intervention that you are using? That may not be sufficient, but, again, please do follow up, and I will be happy to talk with you in greater detail about that.

“You say here, you mention that a subfocus on English learners would require additional measures, et cetera. Does IES expect that English learners who participate in mainstream English classrooms be evaluated differently?”

You know, I sort of stated that simply because my experiences with the reviewers, there is often—there are questions raised about the degree to which measures of English—of English language learners' proficiency in English, the degree to which that helps us answer foundational or fundamental comprehension questions. What you really need to think about is not what IES wants, but you need to think about what a panel of expert reviewers would say when they are thinking about how comprehension intervention designed to be used with both monolingual English speakers and English language learners, what kinds of questions they might ask about the types of measures you would need.

“Do agreements of schools at this point need to include the efficacy level of participation? One might anticipate a small number in the R&D process than the evaluation process. Which needs to be described at this point?”

That’s a good question, and I think an important one to think about. You absolutely need to have in your application an indication that you have schools or teachers who are willing to work with you in that development process. I think that everyone will acknowledge that it is hard to know who is going to be—who could commit for an efficacy project that might not be happening until three or four years down the line. I think that I would recommend that applicants talk about in their resources sections, sort of talk about prior experience in recruiting schools to participate in efficacy studies, and if some of the schools where the development work is going would be possible sites for an efficacy study, you could certainly have them include that. I hope that answered that question.

“How many do you expect to fund from support team applications? You mean the core team applications? You said only one would be funded from the assessment team application.”

We said—I think we said one or two is what it says in the RFA. For the core teams, I didn’t state a number because we don’t have a number that we set out there. What we hope is that through the review process, we will get a sufficient number of high-quality core team applications that we will be able to fund a sufficient number of core team applications to cover the prekindergarten-to-grade-12 age span.

What the actual number will look like, it’s hard to know at this point. Sorry, that’s not a very straightforward answer, but, certainly, it will be more than one, we hope. But, again, the applications that kind of—what we actually—how we make recommendations, the funding really depends upon what the panel of reviewers believe about the quality of the application. That is why I am not able to answer that question sort of straightforwardly.

“To what degree should ongoing professional development plans for the intervention be described in your proposal?”

I’m not entirely sure what you mean by “ongoing professional development plans.” Clearly, professional development will be a component of the intervention, of any interventions being proposed, and I would expect that professional development will need to be a part of the efficacy study. If you have knowledge about what those components will be, please do include them in your application.

“Should the evaluation team be at a different institution from the R&D and basic research team? What is the expectation regarding organizational separation, appearance of objectivity, et cetera?”

I do believe that it is important for the evaluation team to be distinct from the R&D, from the development and the basic research team. I don't know—the degree to which that has to be organizationally separate is, I think, an open question. I think that the burden will be on the applicants to describe how the efficacy team will be able to evaluate the interventions with objectivity, and that sort of also means that there will need to be a discussion of what the role of the development team will be in the efficacy studies, as well as the cognitive team.

I hope I sort of—I got a follow-up question to that. I am going to just restate it and hope that I answered it correctly or coherently. It says, ***“Should the evaluation team be separate in some way from the rest of the core team, or can a single institution house both the R&D and evaluation team members?”***

I certainly think that they could be housed at the same institution. However, the applicant will need to be very clear about the separation between the two teams in terms of the evaluation process.

“Will IES consider funding a study that promotes reading comprehension in Spanish for students who are native Spanish speakers and in bilingual programs that emphasize reading comprehension in Spanish and English?”

I want to recommend that if you are really interested in working with English language learners and that is your population of interest, that you should really look at our English language learners topic within the Education Research Grants RFA. That would be the natural home for that kind of research. I think that if that is your only population of interest and you are really interested in that, you should talk with Caroline Ebanks who is our program officer for the English Language Learners competition.

I don't have my visual cues to know if people are typing really, really fast on the other side. I think if not, if we don't have any other questions, I am sure that for those of us on the East Coast, it is getting close to lunch time. For those of you on the West Coast, you may want to go get some more coffee.

I do want to encourage everyone to, please, give me a call. If I haven't already talked to you, if you are interested in talking more about your particular applications or particular projects, I am quite interested in talking with you and learning more about the work that you are proposing to do. Please do be in touch, and I am looking forward to learning more about the projects you are proposing. Thanks a lot.